5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

423 one party fails to make the required response. It creates a wrong impression to
593 speak of land being 'vested' in a man if all he has (independently of some
woman) is a cleared patch of ground on which nothing grows; nor is the woman
[578] in a better position as she cannot (independently) bring any crop to maturity as she needs the man's garden magic. As we shall see below, 'rights' in all Orokaiva land transactions are limited in some way similar to this.

3. *Land Transactions between Men and Spirits*

775 A second basic transaction mediated by the land is that between the soul of a
423 recently deceased person and a new-born infant. The Orokaiva believe in transmigration of souls. But this transmigration occurs through the mediation of
887 the piece of land where the spirit of the dead person has taken up special
241 residence. This is usually the garden he or she was cultivating at the time of death. It is a fact of Orokaiva life that old people do not stop gardening as long as they have any strength left in their bodies. Waddell's study of time allocation in Sivepe showed that after the age of fifty-five, time spent on productive subsistence activity, especially in the garden, declined only slightly, whereas non-productive activity (e.g. social obligations, dealings with external agencies) declined very sharply (1968: 104). Old people devote their reduced energies almost exclusively to their gardens, grow progressively closer to their gardens and away from the social network, until finally, after death, their spirit becomes still more closely attached to the land. Their souls re-enter association with the village through transmigration.

775 Crops from the garden cultivated by the deceased may not be eaten by any
768 member of the deceased's lineage. They are harvested by the heir and given away by him to persons outside the lineage. No *here* are taken from these crops.
241 After a suitable period of fallow, the garden is replanted, but even then the land is not thought to be free of the deceased's spirit. Very often the son or brother of the deceased plants the garden and uses the produce to give a feast. It is thought that the spirit presents no danger to food grown in that plot afterwards.

775 Transmigration is affected by a ritual performed shortly after the birth of an
851 infant. The parents take the child to the land where the spirit of the deceased is believed to reside. They seek the spirit by placing leaves of a fragrant plant called
774 *mo* in a creek which runs through the land. When the spirit is thought to have entered the leaves, the parents address it thus: 'You are dead now. We shall look after the land and we shall look after the baby so it will become big and strong. Then this child will look after the land.' The wife, in preparation for this rite, has brought the baby to the garden in a string bag, and has also brought a stick. When she arrives in the garden, she places the stick in the ground and hangs the baby in its string bag from the stick. After the ritual by the water, she drops some of the leaves by the stick, then takes the baby, the bag and the rest of the leaves and returns home with her husband. The custom is for the husband to say at night: 'I hear the baby crying.' He is expected to go back to the garden and talk to the baby that is believed to be in the stick, telling it that the parents will now look after it and there is no need to cry. He should then take the stick, with the 'baby' inside it, to his home.

[753] The significance of this ritual became a little clearer to me through the case of

a baby, named Jarata, who became sick and died at the age of nine months (of gastro-enteritis). I was told the cause of death was the father's neglect to collect the stick. The baby Jarata who died was described as a spirit baby (*meni ahihi*); the real baby (*meni be*) had been left in the garden inside the stick and was taken away by the fairies (*sovai*). When the baby became sick, the medicine man went to collect the stick, no doubt with appropriate magic, but it was too late; the 'real baby' was no longer there.

This explanation, referring to the father's neglect, was given by members of Jarata's maternal clan. But I was given a second explanation by the child's paternal clan. According to them, the child died because the mother did not look after the land properly. The assumption here is that if the garden where the child obtains what we provisionally call his soul is well tended, then the child's body will also grow well, but if the garden is neglected (horticulturally or ritually), the child will become sick and die. This intimate connection between the garden and the well-being of the soul endures to some extent throughout life but is especially critical in infancy before a child is able to walk and grows teeth.

It is clear that the 'baby in the stick' resembles what is generally known as an 'external soul'. In its more usual form an 'external soul' resides in an object which is carefully preserved from danger, for any vicissitude that may threaten the object will also threaten the life of the person to whom the 'external soul' belongs. Normally such an object is carefully buried and kept out of harm's way. It appears that the Orokaiva do believe in external souls in this sense, and that they reside in particular specimens of a plant after which a person is named, but that is not relevant here. The concept of the baby in the stick differs in interesting ways from the usual kind of 'external soul'.

The first difference is one of terminology. When I asked whether the part of the baby that was in the stick was called its *ahihi* (spirit) this was denied explicitly. On the contrary, it was the *ahihi* of the child that the mother took with her to the village after the ritual and it was the *ahihi* that the mother was left with when the child sickened and died. The child I had been looking at for several months and that died of gastro-enteritis was nothing but an *ahihi* and it was for that reason that it wasted away and could not live. The part left in the stick and stolen by the fairies was actually the child's *hamo*, its body. Emphatically, therefore, the Orokaiva believe that *ahihi* can be corporeal and that *hamo* can be incorporeal.

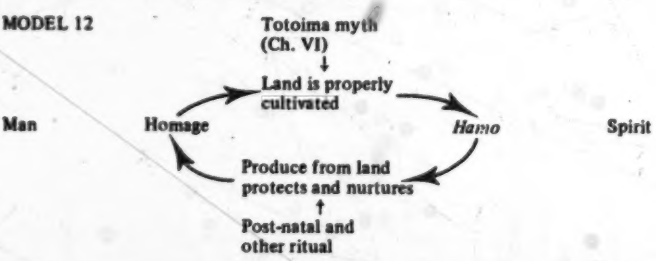
Let us now consider more precisely the transaction between deceased and infant that may be called transmigration of souls, which is mediated through the land. Let us start with the death of a man of the Seho clan who was called Jarata (1). Jarata's spirit stayed on the land he had been cultivating at the time of death. Some six years later, Jarata's brother lent this land for a season to Gilford, the husband of a classificatory sister. Gilford's wife was pregnant at the time. When the infant was born, it was named by the man who had lent the land, and was given the name of the dead brother, Jarata. As far as I understand, the effect of this act of naming was to attach the *ahihi* of Jarata (1) to the infant, Jarata (2). (A male infant may obtain its name from either its mother's or its father's patrilineage.) But in addition to *ahihi*, the baby had to be given bodily strength and vigorous growth, in other words, it had to have *hamo*. This could be obtained only from the garden where Jarata (1) was still present. Jarata's *hamo*

5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

774 was thought to inhere in his old garden plot and in the products growing there,
775 or more specifically perhaps in the water flowing through the garden, for it is in
[823] the water that the dead tend to live, even though in a more general sense they are everywhere in the garden, as well as in the abode of the dead under the mountain and in other places also. The transfer of the *hamo* to the child is a drawn-out process that may last a year or so. It is done through the mediation of the stick. A mother carries this stick with her every day as she goes to the gardens and she is supposed to hang the child from the stick as she does her work. I have actually seen another mother do this for months. The child draws soul substance through the stick all the time and as the taro and other crops fill out and become vigorous, the child will do the same. It is through this absorption of *hamo* that the child can later fulfil the promise made to the dead Jarata, namely to look after the garden from which he has drawn his life-force.

769 The ritual formulae spoken by the parents in the garden and quoted above
775 both clearly have the form of a bargain, by which the spirit of the deceased is
774 asked to give *hamo* (a combination of supernatural protection and nutrient strength) to the infant in exchange for proper homage. This transaction may be
241 expressed in the following exchange cycle.

MODEL 12



Superficially, it may appear that the exchange cycle given here offers a generalisation that goes far beyond the data I have presented. My data present a transaction between a deceased and a particular couple, with one particular child, who promise to look after the land. My model, however shows a transaction between any spirit attached to a piece of land, and any cultivator. Yet it may rightly be argued that every couple cultivates, at one time or another, a large number of plots, and that only some of these plots are linked to their cultivators through post-natal rites performed in respect of themselves or their children. This argument, however, is irrelevant. Spirits are attached to every garden plot, and there is always some person charged with the care of those
[596] spirits. The senior member of an extended family, the 'father of the ground' (*enda mama*) has the ultimate responsibility to see that the spirits are not neglected. When he gives any cultivator a usehold over a piece of land, it is understood that this cultivator takes over the care of the spirits on the land. This care includes making food offerings to the spirit on a raised platform built for that purpose. More broadly, the responsibility to the spirit also involves the proper performance of all ritual and horticultural activities prescribed as parts of the cultivation cycle.

5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

Why does man have this duty? According to the data I have presented, the duty arises out of a promise made at the time of birth. The land is identified with the ancestor who gave the infant its body. The cultivator works not only to 'survive' but also to repay to that ancestor the debt he has incurred by being given a body.

These beliefs are relevant not only to land as a mediating element between living and dead, but also between man and man. The religious system is unconcerned with the consanguineous relationship between the living servitor and the spirit of the dead. It is the service alone that counts, while the capacity to provide the service rests on no more than the authorised occupancy of land. The implication for land transactions between men is that such transactions can never be purely economic.

In the present instance Jarata's brother, in lending his plot to a classificatory brother-in-law, simultaneously passed over the duty to care for the spirit of his dead brother, whose spirit resided on that plot. This is especially interesting as that affine (and his son Jarata (2), if he had lived) belonged to a clan different from the spirit's. Thus, on a religious level, there is no recognition of a clan's 'right' to certain land, but only of a sequence of cumulative co-operative acts between man and spirit, such that each move by one party calls forth an appropriate move in response. We shall now turn to the social aspect of these transactions, i.e. the conditions upon which authorised occupancy is granted.

4. *Transfer of Useholds between Agnates*

In suggesting that land transfers should be studied as social rather than economic transactions, we may meet with the initial objection that land transfers occur in response to economic needs and are adequately explained without introducing social considerations. But among the Orokaiva, there are many land transfers for which an economic explanation would in practice be hard to find. Certainly there are cases where land is transferred to a household notably short of land, but I know of more cases where the purpose of transfer was to have the company of a good friend on a neighbouring plot and other cases where the only discernible purpose was to make a gift and strengthen a social bond. Crocombe and Rimoldi have recorded a large number of land transfers in Inonda and Sivepe, a large proportion of which were outside the extended family and even outside the lineage. By no means all of these were redistributions to help the deprived. Many were mainly for the sake of strengthening sociability. It is therefore reasonable to inquire into the significance of land in the mediation of social relationships.

We may, first of all, divide these transfers into two broad types: those occurring within corporate groups, and those occurring outside them. In a strict unilineal system, it would be possible to draw a land map showing areas owned by a lineage, and if the system were segmentary, one might speak of a clan domain, a tribal domain and so forth. Such boundaries would theoretically remain unchanged in perpetuity as each generation inherited holdings in the patriline or matriline. No New Guinea system of which we have a recent professional description approximates even remotely to such a model, at least in practice, as we find that many land holdings in so-called patrilineal groups pass into the hands of uterine kin and affines. Among the Orokaiva the departures

5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

household to other households with which the bonds were intimate. Their function was to maintain existing social relationships. Nobody maintained relations of this sort with every household in the village; in the twenty-eight days for which I kept tally, the number of partnerships of individual households varied from three to fourteen out of a total of twenty-two households surveyed. This means that the households with the smallest networks had only three exchange partners during the survey period, out of a possible total of twenty-one, and the households with the largest network still failed to exchange with seven of the available households. The average number of exchange partners for the sample was 8.5. If the survey period had been longer, no doubt this average would have been higher, but even when critical events occurred (there was one death and one important visitor in the survey period) food contributions were not sent by *all* households, nor even by all households belonging to the same clan. Each household had its own private network, partly determined by close consanguineal and affinal ties but partly also by idiosyncratic considerations.

Taro gifts made to establish new relationships were of a different kind. In speaking of a 'new' relationship, I do not mean only those cases where gifts were made to persons hitherto unknown. Such cases were rare indeed. It may be justified, however, to speak of 'new' relationships when the nature of a relationship was changed dramatically, made significantly more intimate, as the result of a ceremony where gifts were made. Such a change would occur when one village invited another to a feast, thus terminating old hostilities and placing the relationship on a new footing. Similarly, a dramatic change in relationship would occur as the result of a wedding ceremony when two kinship groups, whatever their previous relation, would begin to regard each other as affines. On a smaller scale, some relationships are intimate only at the time of actual contact. An example would be guest friendships and trading partnerships. Here the intimacy has to be re-established on every one of the infrequent occasions when one partner visits the other. Even if there has been no conflict whatever, Orokaiva always ritually assume that a long-absent friend has become a stranger and the relationship must be restored. As far as I know, Orokaiva do not carry this notion as far as the Maori, who greet a long-absent friend as though they were still heavily in mourning for his death.

Taro is always given by the hosts when such a 'new' relationship is established. But in such cases the taro is uncooked, and still has the top attached to it. I was told that taro, in that form, still contained a spirit and was 'alive'. The ceremonial way of giving such taro is in the form of a pyramid-like mound, the tubers facing outwards, the tops facing inwards. On the top of the mound, a few taro are placed with the tops facing upwards. The mounds should be built on a *gaga*. It will be noticed that the position of the taro on the *gaga* is precisely the same as the position in which Totoima's son lay ('with his chest turned upwards') when his father attacked him.

If we compare this type of gift with the type considered previously, we notice several reversals of the symbolism:

5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
Mountain Orokaiva

Taro given for	*Maintaining relationships*	*Starting relationships*
Parts of plant given	tuber only	entire plant
State of preparation	cooked	raw
Donor's sex	female	male
Ancestral twin with which gift is identified	female sibling	male sibling

The giver of a feast is always a male. Taro is hardly ever the only gift made on a ceremonial occasion, as pigs, *hambo* etc. must also be presented. Nonetheless, taro is essential as a mediating element in the starting of a 'new' relationship.

What is the significance of taro gifts in this context? Sahlins' suggestion that staple food when used as a gift object is symbolic of hearth, home and mother seem less cogent here than in the case of gifts of cooked food discussed earlier. In previous chapters I have presented a method for interpreting actions aimed at the establishment of social relations. I suggested that some objects are believed to have a special potency in attracting partners and that this potency is believed to be due to the presence of the donor's spirit in the gift object and the transfer of that spirit to the recipient through the mediation of the object. The questions are these: why, and in what circumstances, can a *male* use taro for the mediation of social exchange? What is the mythical and philosophic charter for such mediation? What is the distinctive power of feast taro to compel the recipient to respond to the donor's wishes?

The spirit substance transferred by the *male* when he gives taro at a feast is derived from his ancestors who are present in the land and in the tops of the taro. Just which ancestors are thought to be present it is hard to say, but they include the dead of the lineage who have used the land and they also undoubtedly include the spirit of the original *dema*, Totoima. It is believed that only certain varieties of taro are capable of successfully transmitting spirit in this way. These are known as feasting taro (*pondo ba*). I obtained a list of them, but this list was not very instructive. It contained virtually all the taro varieties growing in the informant's garden, though I was able to identify a few grown varieties which were specifically stated to be unsuitable for feast taro. Only a small minority of plants growing in the gardens belong to these varieties.

Males can use taro for the mediation of social exchange only if they are feasting varieties and if they are displayed, complete with tops, in such a way that they may symbolically represent Totoima's son: lying on a *gaga* with their chests turned upwards. What message does this symbolism convey? Totoima's son appears in the myth in two apparently contradictory roles: that of victim (eaten by his father) and of victor (killer of his father). So much is indisputable fact. It is easy to see what the gift of a feasting taro might mean if we take this symbolism to its logical conclusion. The message would be: 'You may eat me now; I shall kill you later.' No informant actually explained this meaning to me and this interpretation is therefore no more than conjecture. It accurately represents, however, the actual traditional relationship between feasting partners. A man who gives a feast deprives and humbles himself; every one of his gifts is symbolically a sacrifice of himself. His feasting partner is, in a symbolic sense, his enemy with whom he is now becoming reconciled. In order to effect

27: Schwimmer E-5 (1966-1970) 1979 QJ23 Orokaiva QJ23

taro ancestress is usually described as discovering the taro in a lake or other 'round water'. The demigod Totima comes closest to providing a general model of the primeval world of the swidden agriculturist and pig-raiser. Like Prometheus he is a sacrificial figure.[16]

Totoima was at the origin of the feasting institution (though there are other myths of the origin of feasting). It is here that questions of moral values mostly arise as feasting (*ergo* peace making) is the moral act *par excellence*. A direct connection is laid between the virtue of settling conflict and of feasting on the one hand and the fertility and yield of the garden on the other, as enemies are thought to ensorcell the gardens. Another important factor was the 'care' (*simbari*) (a general term covering magical as well as technical aspects) taken of the garden. The eldest male of the extended family, as father of the land, had a special duty as regards *simbari*. Garden magic was, however, made by all married males; they also made gifts to ancestors, who were thought to live in gardens and be reborn from there.

The model of the virtuous man was he who shared out his produce and made feasts (*hande embo*). Such a man would grow a surplus of food in a feasting garden. His power (*ivo*) would be manifest in the abundance of his pigs and taro. The model of the 'active man' would be the organizer of feasts in which the whole village participated (*kiti jigari embo*). Subordinate to him, but still high in reputation, would be experts at sorcery, healing, feather decoration and various forms of hunting, as well as those excelling in debate, rhetoric and diplomacy (*keari embo*).[17]

Identification occurred not only with crops, gods and ancestors, but also with trees harbouring local spirits, plant emblems harbouring lineage ancestors, animal guardians and plant doubles which were kept in the garden (usually surrounded by medicinal herbs) and contained the owner's life spirit, or perhaps name-spirit for the man bore the plant's name. A more complex aspect of identification with pigs and feast gardens is that such produce is destined to be given away, i.e. the owner expects to lose control over it; yet the donor remains identified with it and it calls for a return.[18] The same is true for the range of manufactures (clothes, pots, ornaments) that change hands at feasts.

The pattern described here is characteristic of what Sahlins (1974) called the domestic mode of production. Such a system produces, in his opinion, nothing but use values, even if they are 'exchanged' at feasts, for such 'exchange' is symbolically equivalent to a temporary extension of commensality. Slightly more complex